



Date: September 16, 2020

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For Immediate Release

Subject: Water and Recreational Safety

## WATER SAFETY IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

Although the summer is coming to an end, there are still plenty of fair-weather days left to take to the river and many people come to Kankakee County from all over to enjoy the natural beauty our parks and rivers have to offer. Water-related accidents claim too many lives across our nation's parks and waterways. Many victims of water-related accidents were not trying to swim but were simply engaging in activities as innocent as wading, taking photos, or playing along the river bank. Those victims attempting to swim in swift waters overestimated their swimming ability and underestimated river currents and those wading in the river weren't aware of the dangerous drop-offs or holes in the river bed. None of these drowning victims suspected that tragedy was about to overwhelm them.

Anytime you are recreating in and around the parks and rivers it is important to be aware of your surroundings. Here are some tips to keep you safe:

- Rivers and streams can still have dangerous currents when the water levels are low.
- Slippery rocks, an unstable shoreline or even a distraction that takes your focus away from the water, can cause an accident -- quickly and quietly.
- Check river and stream conditions before heading out on your adventure and always let someone know where you are going and when you will return.
- **Follow "No Swimming" signs and any other posted signage in recreation areas.**
- Where allowed, choose swimming areas carefully. Often hazards are not visible in what may seem like a good place to swim or wade.
- Wear a properly fitting personal flotation device (life jacket) for all river activities. Don't assume you have the swimming skills to keep you afloat, even the strongest swimmers can drown.
- When near rapids or other moving water, always stay on the established trails or developed areas.
- Keep a close watch on children even if they are far from the water. Water safety for children is especially important as they can quickly enter the water and get in trouble when your attention is diverted for only a moment.
- Never walk, play or climb on slippery rocks and logs near rivers and streams.
- Never dive in waters where you are unable to see the bottom or in areas where no diving signs are posted.
- Be cautious of sudden drop offs, know where key danger areas are.
- Be aware of Low Head Dams. (a small structure that impounds a small amount of water and spans the width of river or stream).

### Boating Safety Tips:

- Take a boating safety course.
- All vessels should have an anchor device with 50ft. of anchor line. If motor failure occurs, you can anchor and call for help.
- Having a canoe paddle in your boat can be useful to bring your boat to shore in case of motor failure.
- Waterfowl season is quickly approaching, if you participate in this sport remember to wear warm, appropriate clothing to keep warm when boating or wading in the dark to get to blinds. Traveling in the dark makes you very vulnerable so it is recommended to have personal flotation devices and bright coloring in the event of an accident.
- It is important to remember that personal flotation devices (lifejackets) can be lifesaving tools.
  - Wear brightly colored lifejackets, you want to be visible if you go overboard.
  - Use lifejackets that are impact resistant.
  - These devices can also help retain body heat in cold water.
- Be particularly cautious near dams, there can be many hazards caused by water flows, human activities, environmental factors, and the structures themselves and the back current can pull you in. Kankakee and Wilmington Dams have had multiple incidents over the years, some fatal.

### **Areas where there have been known accidents in the Kankakee River include:**

- Hide's Hole: Near Water Treatment Plant
- Devil's Hole: Approximately 1/3 mile downstream of area #2 on the Route 113 side of river
- Rock Creek: Located near the concession stand and suspension bridge at the mouth of rock creek on the Route 102 side of Kankakee River State Park
- Indian Caves: Located along the Perry Farm trail
- Kankakee Dam
- Wilmington Dam
- Momence Dam

Whatever brings you to the water make sure to take the steps to keep yourself and your family safe.

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